CHAPTER VI

LIFE OF BUDDHA

BEFORE RENUNCIATION

Lives of great people are a constant source of inspiration for all, although the genre of biographical works is a rather late development. In ancient times people did make a random note of their thoughts and also for the great and eminent men it was habitual to write diaries. In the case of such historical people these diaries provide valuable information about the various episodes in their lives. This information combined with the several legends and myths associated with them have been handed down from one generation to the other and are codified at some points of time in a coherent biographical form and style. Since these are not the first hand accounts, they do not necessarily represent the true life of the character and are certainly influenced by the world view of the author as well as the time of composition to some extent. The same information available about a person is used by different people over a span of time, resulting in the outcome of different works of varying latitudes. For example the life of Rama depicted by Valmiki in Ramayana, which is considered to be the first epic work of Indian literature dating 6th century B.C., has been a continuous source
of inspiration for several works in the later periods till date in almost all the Indian languages.

The life of Buddhas has also inspired many works in India and outside. Buddha himself did not leave any written material about his life and about what he preached. However the initial years of his life would have been no secret to the public because he being the Prince would have been the focus of public attention. Then as a sage whatever was heard or seen of him was handed down within the Order among his disciples continuously from generation to generation. It was coded down much later after his death when the necessity to codify all that was expounded by Buddha during his long years of preaching at various places and lasting nearly fifty years, was felt. Thus various events and episodes related to the life of Buddha, including the references made by Buddha himself or by his disciples together, have provided material for the biographical works on Buddha, apt for the founder of one of the major religious sects. The prime objective to arrange it collectively in a biographical order must have been to glorify him as a super human being and also to inspire his followers by the virtuous deeds of his life.

Thus the scattered information available in the canons, arranged coherently and influenced by the ingenuity of the writer has resulted in full length works like Buddha Charita.

The very birth of Buddha is generally expounded in terms of Karmic-retributions, the main stay of the Buddhist philosophy, in order to show that due to the various virtuous deeds in his previous lives as Bodhisattva, Buddha was finally born as Gotama Buddha as the Buddha to be. This fact is accounted in the "Mahapadana Sutta" of Mahavagga in Digha Nikaya, the long
discourse, that relates the accounts of six previous Buddhas.
Similarly in Buddha Vamsa, the legends associated with the twenty four Buddhas that lived in the past are related as well as that of Gotama Buddha and Metteyya, the future Buddha. The Mahapadana Sutta gives the thirty two identification marks mentioned below that separate Buddha from the other human beings. It is also given in the Brahmay Sutta of Majjhima-Nikaya.
Mostly the episode of birth is preceded by the descent of Buddha from the Tusita heaven, where he resided, to the earth entering the womb of Queen Maya. This event is related in the "Acchariyabbuta-Dhamma- Sutta" of Majjhima-Nikaya and "Nalaka Sutta" of Kuddaka-Nikaya and in "Mahavastu" also.
The most widely adapted portion of the life of Buddha is that of his life before renouncing the world.
In "Anguttara Nikaya", one of the five Nikaya collections, his early life at the King's palace, full of luxuries with three separate Palaces for the three seasons is given. Likewise in "Khuddaka Nikaya", the portion dealing with the events of Buddha's life is Sutta Nipata in which the Maha Vagga section, the Nalaka Sutta, Pabbajja Sutta and Padhana Sutta present the biographical accounts in verse. "Dhammcakkappavattana Sutta" of "Samyutta Nikaya" and the "Mahavagga" which is one of the two "Khandhakas", the aspect of Buddha's attainment of enlightenment and thereafter the spread of his teachings and inclusion of various people into the order is given. Similarly in Majjhima Nikaya the stories about the conversion of some people like Angulimal etc. is given whereas in the second part of the
"Khandhakas" called Cullavagga certain biographical portions are given.

The "Mahaparinibbana Sutta" as the name suggests gives an account of the last days of Buddha, his death in Kushinara, the last rites and distribution of his relics.

This kind of fragmented information about the various stages of his life is put together coherently in biographical form in various works, the most comprehensive literary work being Asva Gosh's Buddha Charita. Another work called Nidana Katha is in the form of a prologue to the Jataka stories and is also detailed. In this work, the setting is in the remote past about the lineage of the past twenty four Buddhas starting with Dipankara up to Sumedha, the one who descended to the earth.

Then the story of his birth, youth enlightenment continues and concludes at the point of the gift of Jetavana Vihar from a rich merchant Anathapindika.

In the work Saundarananda Kavya, the focus of story turns to Nanda, the cousin of Buddha who is inducted into the order by Buddha much against his own wish and that of his wife Sundari. Here the episodes from the life of Buddha directly are limited to the first three chapters. It begins with the description of the hermitage of sage Kapila which in due course of time became the site for the city of Kapilavastu. Then the glory of the King Sushodhana is described at length and the theme story of the decision of Bodhisattva to be born as his son followed by the dream of Queen Maya and subsequently the birth of Buddha, which is accompanied by the birth of his step brother Nanda. Finally Nanda renounces everything and ultimately attains enlightenment,
spreading Buddha's teachings. This work especially, is not a stereotype repetition of the contents and speaks of the creativity of the writer especially in the main plot related to Nanda, the Buddha's cousin.

Yet, Asvagosh's epoch making work based on the life of Buddha is Buddha Charita. Here too, as in 'Saundarananda-kavya', the author's poetical imagination is clearly evident. The first half of the work deals with the unusual divine phenomenon accompanying the Prince's birth as well as the other worldly affairs associated with it like various festivities, Prince's luxurious life etc. that are vividly described. In other aspects also like the state of his mind on encountering death, old age etc., the character's repeated appeals to the Prince to forego his idea of renunciation, conditions of those left behind by the Prince etc. are portrayed vividly.

The latter half although described at length is more theological and Buddha's doctrine, the rolling of the wheel of law and the attainment of parinirvana constitute the subject matter here. The author has extensively drawn similies and proverbs from the Indian classical and mythological themes pertaining to the non-Buddhistic traditions.

While these are the major works that represent the life of Buddha in India, in Japan it is adapted in the Setsuwa Literature in the form of the main theme of the story in some cases and for referential purposes in others in a fragmented form.

The work "Sambo E-koto", meaning the three treasures, refer to the treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha in which several inferences to the life of Buddha are drawn. For example in the preface to volume one of the work, it is given as below:
"Sakyamuni Buddha, when he was a commoner, for time immemorial felt compassion for the masses and did not hesitate in the least to sacrifice for all. Thus he was born in the palace but controlling the five desires, he left his father and sat under the Bodhi tree, subjugating the four evil demons "Chatvaromara" and attained the Buddhahood. Then possessing the three types of learning, 'tisran-shiksha' and four kinds of eloquent speech as well as five kinds of eyesight 'pancha chaksu' and six kinds of supernatural powers he shone with the thirty two distinguished marks and eight distinctive body marks. His forehead was as imposing as the sky, his face round like a full moon, the arch shaped thin eye brows like the arch moon and his teeth white like snow. The eyes could be compared with the lotus flowers and the lips to red fruits. His spotless golden complexion gleamed and his soles resting on lotus flowers did not touch the ground even when he walked. These various omens symbolised his virtuous good deeds in the previous births suggesting the attainment of the highest point".

Further more highlighting the compassionate nature and Buddha's miraculous powers and good deeds it says:

"Buddha's life although eternal lasted for eighty years on the earth. In reality, if the entire earth is crushed into grain-sized fragments, even then it would not suffice to count the number of years that Buddha lived. Many strange phenomena took place on the earth even after he had attained parinirvana". Subsequently in the preface to the second volume there is reference to the spread of dharma stating "Buddha first expounded the Kegon Kyo, the Avatamsaka Sutra, for Bodhisattvās. It was

\[1\] Sambo E-Koto: vol.I, p.43-47
like the sun illuminating the high peaks. Next he expounded Agonkyo, the Agma Sutra, for the glorious ones which is like the sun risen high above, illuminating the deep valleys. Then he expounded the various scriptures in order to enlighten the masses which was like the rain showers that provide moisture to the dry plants, each one absorbing as much as their respective needs.

In the sixteen councils held during his lifetime he expounded the wisdom sutra of 'Prajna-paramita'. Then for more than forty years he expounded the miraculous lotus sutra. He discoursed at the vulture peak and died in the Sala grove. Then his disciple Kashyapa gathered the scriptures and spread its teachings all over, which resonated like the sound of the ringing bell....

Thus those teachings lasted in the world even after Buddha died. Generally speaking Tenjiku is the birth place of Buddha where he lived and expounded the religion. China is the land where Buddhism spread. In both these two countries Buddhism has declined" 1. This latter portion of the above quote is a kind of epilogue to the life of Buddha stating the condition of Buddhism at that time i.e. the year 984. The third and final volume of the work gives the origin of various annual events and festivals associated with Buddhism. Here too, there are references to the different aspects of the life of Buddha. For example while relating the background of the ceremony of Saiin no Anan Keka, the condolence meeting at Saiin for Ananda. There is reference to his childhood pointing how Maya had passed away when he was just seven days old. It also points out the basic stand of the enlightened Buddha being opposed to the idea of allowing women into the order and denied it even to his foster mother. It

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1 Sambo E-Koto: vol.II, p.147-150
says, "The aunt of Buddha approached him and asked him thrice to allow her to enter the holy order but Buddha refused. She, disappointed and hurt, came out of the 'Jetavana-Vihara' in tears, and stood at the gate. Just then Ananda happened to be entering and spoke to her. After knowing the truth he approached Buddha and said, "When the Lord was born Queen Maya passed away only after seven days. Mahapraja-Pati brought the Prince up sincerely because of her deep compassion. Now of all the persons, when she wishes to enter the holy path, why is the Lord not granting her the permission." "I am not denying what she has done for me. Yet I do not intend to allow any woman to enter the order. It is because in that case the period of righteous law shall be cut short by five hundred years," Buddha declared.

It was after the repeated persuasions by Anand that Buddha finally gave his consent. Thus Anand is especially revered by the nuns for being their protector.

Similarly there is the memorial service of the temple Sankaiji, the present Kofukuji in Nara, to commemorate the death anniversary of Buddha, held on 15th of February every year. While explaining the origin of the event there is reference to the last stage of the life of Buddha viz. Parinirvana as follows:

"Sakya-Muni Tathagata in order, to attain Parinirvana proceeded from Magadha to Kushinara. Then on the fifteenth of February, in the grove of Sala trees by Hirannavati river he passed away. The sandal wood tree that was in bloom since the time he was born dried up. Even the leaves of the Bodhi tree withered away...."
Such scattered references are found in various other works of the "Setsuwa-literature" also.

The entire life of Buddha first appears together, though in a condensed biographical form, in the Indian section of Konjaku Monogatari. The opening story of this voluminous work relates the descent of Buddha to-be, from the Trayastrimsha heaven to be born in the human world. It continues up to the episode of his attainment of enlightenment and preaching to the five monks. It is presented in a dry and chronological order void of any descriptions, yet the biographical section is complete in itself because it includes all the different stages in his life viz. birth, youth, yearning to seek for the ultimate truth, penances, enlightenment, spread of dharma and parinirvana.

In Konjaku Monogatari all the above stages are placed together by the compiler, except for the portions dealing with Buddha's last days. Those episodes about his parinirvana are placed towards the end of volume three, after the various stories about his rolling the wheel of law, conversions, episodes about his disciples etc. are narrated. This obviously represents a systematic approach on the part of the author while compiling this work.

By not placing the stories of Buddha's parinirvana first and then relating his deeds of spreading of dharma later, the author has avoided having his work appear unnatural and unsystematic.

Generally speaking, in Japan, the different episodes in the life of Buddha have been arranged systematically under eight stages. These collectively are called "Hotoke-Hasso". The term

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1 Bukkyo Jiten: P.101
symbolising the eight stages in the life of Buddha which with some degree of variation are classified as follows:

First stage descent from heaven It usually refers to the decision to descend from heaven by the would-be Buddha

Second stage conception Buddha entering the womb in the form of a six tusked elephant, the dream seen by Queen Maya

Third stage birth and early years Birth, childhood and marriage yearning for search of the ultimate truth

Fourth stage renunciation Leaving the palace on a chariot

Fifth stage penances Undergoing hardships and meditation in the forests.

Sixth stage enlightenment Attainment of Buddhahood and his first discourse.

Seventh stage discourse Spreading his teachings.

Eighth stage Parinirvana The last days of his life.

In Japan the biographical works dealing with the life of Buddha are based on these stages directly or indirectly, the representative works being "Kako genzai in-kakyo" the sutra of the Karmic retributions of the past and the present. In this four fascicle work (444-453), just like Mahapadana Sutta, Buddha himself relates the good deeds of the past that resulted in his birth as Buddha. Then he continues with his present life relating Saint Asita's predictions, his youth, yearning to
renounce the world followed by his flight from the palace, rigorous penances for six years and then ultimately adoption of the middle path on the suggestion of Brahmadeva. This is followed by the episode of his first discourse at Mriga deva, then the later discourse to Yasas, conversion of the three Kashyapa brothers, return of Mudgalyayana and Shariputra and conversions of Kashyapa etc. The period allocated to each span of the eight stages, though with some degree of variation, is seven years of infancy, eight years of childhood, four years of youth and then renunciation at the age of nineteen. Subsequently the attainment of Buddhahood at the age of thirty or so and after fifty years of preaching he passed away at the age of eighty. This work has been the prime influence on various other works in Japan. In the temple archives of 'Seiryoji' temple in Kyoto the biography of Buddha is narrated though in a condensed and chronological manner, with each stage demarcated clearly, beginning with the story of the sixth Buddha, the Kashyapa, born in Tusita heaven.

This theme also appears in the work 'Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei' of the Muromachi period, the term monogatari symbolising fiction including historical fiction. In Muromachi period (1392-1490), the word 'Honji', the true essence, was widely adapted in literature along with the word Monogatari that was popular in the preceding Heian period (794-858). Thus the life story of Buddha too appears in the form of 'Shaka no Honji', the story of Sakyamuni incorporated in Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei. There are two adaptations available one called Togawa version and the other one called Sekihon version. These relate
various events in the life of Buddha in a lucid manner, unfolding like a work of fiction without any clear cut demarcation of the stages as found in the temple archives of Seiryoji-Engi or 'Konjaku Monogatari'.

The eight stages mentioned above are discussed in detail hereafter.

The First Stage of the life of Buddha comprises of his resolve to descend from heaven and take abode in the human world. In this stage there is some discrepancy as in some works like Buddha-Charita it is combined with the actual birth of Buddha, which in turn is treated as the primary stage in his life.

In Konjaku Monogatari, the vast collection of nearly a thousand stories, the opening story is that of the descent of Buddha from heaven titled as "Sakyamuni Tathagat Takes Abode in the Human World"\(^1\) which is given as follows:

Once upon a time in Tenjiku when Sakyamuni Tathagath was still called Bodhisattva, the one who has yet not attained Buddhahood, and lived at 'Naiin' his abode of Tusita heaven, he thought of taking abode in the human world of Jambudvipa. At that time his body showed five signs alien to the heavenly beings. First the celestial beings do not blink but he began to blink, secondly the ornamental garlands on their heads do not wither but it withered in his case. Thirdly the garments of celestial beings do not get soiled but his garments got soiled. Fourthly the celestial beings do not sweat but he began to sweat from underarms. Lastly the heavenly beings do not change their original seats but he began to sit wherever he found one.

\(^1\) Konjaku Monogatari: vol.I, 1
On noticing these signs all the heavenly beings and the Boddhisattvas were suspicious and they said to Tathagath, "On looking at these signs our minds are overawed and bodies shaken. It is our earnest request that you tell us please the significance of these omens". Then replied Bodhisattva, "As you all know no phenomenon is eternal. So I shall also abandon this heavenly abode after a while and will be born in the human world of Jambudvipa. On learning this all of them lamented grievously. On the other hand Bodhisattva contemplated about whom to take as his father and mother in order to be born on earth. He thought of King Shushodhana of Kapilavastu and his Queen Maya to be his parents. Then on the eighth of July in the tenth year of the lunar calendar he entered the womb of Lady Maya. She while sleeping in the night, dreamt the Bodhisattva riding on a six tusked white elephant, emerging from the sky and entering her womb through her right side. It was apparent as a clear crystal, like a thing kept in a pot of lapis lazuli, a gem.

Queen Maya woke up surprised and went to King Shushodhana and related the dream to him. On hearing it the King said, "I also saw a similar dream but am unable to decipher the meaning myself" and immediately he sent for a Brahmin named Asita. After welcoming him with beautiful fragrant flowers and various eatables, he told him about the dream. The Brahmin told the King, "The Prince growing in the Queen's womb has exhibited many good omens. I cannot explain in detail but let me tell you in short O, King! that the child in her womb will light the name of the Sakya clan. When he will be born he will emit light and illuminate everything. The gods like Brahmadeva, Sakro devanam Indra and others shall revere him. Such auspicious omens surely
ought to be that of the Buddha to be. If by chance he does not renounce the world, he will be a Chakravarti-rama, a King who rules the world by rolling the jeweled wheel, bestowed upon him by the heavens, and will have thousands of sons." On hearing this the King was greatly overjoyed and bestowed upon the Brahmin gifts of elephants and horses, and carts loaded with jewels. The Queen also bestowed many jewels on him. The Brahmin accepting all this from the King and Queen departed. It has thus been told to us successively.

These events of the first stage of his life are accounted in Indian as well as Japanese versions almost on the same lines. For example in the 'Pitakas' he first passed away in heaven and entered his mother's womb to be born as a human being. In 'Nidan Katha' his biographical account starts with the lives of the four previous Buddhas along with the 'ten paramitas'.

On the other hand, as pointed out earlier, in certain works like 'Buddha Charita', 'Saundarananda', 'Mahavastu', the starting point is the account of the origin of the city of Kapilavastu the birth place of Buddha and named after the sage Kapila. In Konjaku, Buddha's descent from the Tusita heaven is related vividly along with some additional information. For example, it says that when Bodhisattva decided to be born in the human world his body exhibited five extraordinary signs typical of human beings, replacing the ones of celestial beings ¹. In Indian accounts this point is not mentioned and on the contrary extraordinary signs appearing in Queen Maya, on conceiving the Bodhisattva, are given. According to Pitakas, "When the Boddisattva had descended into his mother's womb she became

¹ Konjaku Monogatari Shu: vol.I, p.15
intrinsically pure, refraining from killing living things, or from accepting anything given unchastely as well as from false speech and from indulgence in wine, liquour and other fermented brews... no kind of affliction arose in her and she was blissful in the absence of all physical fatigue... could see him within her womb with all his limbs, lacking no faculty  

Furthermore the work Lalit-vistar also accounts that the gods used to come and pay homage to Buddha in his mother's womb thrice a day. Not only that "even Maya was attended by devas and she became divine, who when she touched someone that person became free from all kinds of deformities and illnesses" 8. The Nidana Katha also accounts for this fact. This point accounted in the Indian versions is found in "Shaka no Honji" whereas the account of the Buddhisattva exhibiting signs unlike those of the celestial beings is typical of the Konjaku version possibly aiming to highlight the difference between the human beings and celestial beings, as conceived in the Chinese traditions of ascetics. Shaka no Honji says, "On conception Queen Maya exhibited extraordinarily auspicious omens during the ten months of pregnancy - when she drew near dried plants, they bloomed, the old, when they prayed before her, turned young and healthy and the poor became rich" 9.

Furthermore, in Indian texts, the Brahmayu Sutta of Majjhima Nikaya gives the thirty two identification marks on the body of Buddha. Another point common to all the accounts, is that of

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1 The Life of Buddha, Nanamoli, p.3-4

2 Lalit Vistar:vol.VI

3 Nidana Katha: stanza 109

4 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: p.94
Boddhisattva foretelling his parentage while contemplating about the qualities of his parents.

In *Nidanakatha* it is exceptionally long as the Buddha Dipankara relates not only the names of his future parents but also his main disciples and attendants, place and name of the tree where he would attain the Buddhahood etc. In *Lalit vistar* too this is dealt with in a detailed manner although presenting an entirely different picture. According to it Bodhisattva is persuaded by thousands of gods to take birth on earth in order to liberate people. Thus he declares that after twelve years he would enter the womb of his would be mother.

In *Shaka no Honji* also, he proclaims in the dream to Queen Maya "his birth to be in Kapilavastu, enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, discourse on law at Varanasi and Parinirvana at Kushinara. Then mounting on an elephant he descended down to the earth, wishing his father to be King Shushodhana and mother to be Queen Maya ".

Furthermore, it relates this fact being disclosed to Queen Maya who dreamt, "Buddha dwelling in the womb of a human being, sow the germs of Buddhahood in order to rescue the masses in the coming age...then mounting on an elephant he descended down entering her womb from below her right arm. Her menstruation periods stopped and she conceived." 

The reference to Queen Maya's dream is common to all the versions. Although the contents of the dream vary but almost in all the versions the presence of elephant is there. The

1 *Nidanakatha*: stanza 96

2 *Lalit Vistar*: vol. II

3 *Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei*: p.94
Bodhisattva enters her womb, either in the form of an extraordinary elephant or mounted on an elephant, this being the mode of conception typical of Bodhisattva. The famous Chinese pilgrim, Huein Tsiang mentions in his work about a Vihara where this scene of Bodhisattva descending into the womb of his mother is portrayed.

In Konjaku it is not only Queen Maya who saw the dream but the King also saw a similar dream. Then in order to know the meaning he consulted the learned Brahmins. In Nidanakatha the King called sixty four Brahmins of deep learning to interpret the dream. Mostly this aspect of predictions is dealt with a little later after the birth of the Prince. The contents of these predictions are almost the same suggesting that a son would be born and he would either become a universal ruler or renounce the world and would become Buddha the supreme.

Subsequently as per the Japanese classification of 'Hasso' his birth in the human world is the second stage of his life. In Konjaku it is given under the title of "Sakyamuni Tathagat Takes Abode in the Human World" as follows:

Once upon a time in Tenjiku the mother of Sakyamuni Tathagatha, Lady Maya, accompanied by her father Suprabudha came to the Ashoka tree in the Lumbini garden. It was the early Spring Season the day being eighth one of the second month. The Lady, on arriving at the garden got down from the jewelled coach and first decorated herself with the auspicious necklaces and other ornaments and then proceeded to the Asoka tree. As many as eighty lakh four thousand women accompanied her, riding in ten

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1 Buddhist Records of the Western World: p.269
2 Konjaku Monogatari: vol.I, 2
thousand carts. The ministers, court officials etc. also waited upon her. The tree was covered evenly with thick leaves from top to bottom. These were partly green and partly blue and radiated like the multi-colours on the neck of the peacock. The lady stood facing the tree and as she held up her right hand to pluck a branch, a child was born from her right armpit. His body glowed with light. At that time various celestial beings, demons, Brahma devas, brahmins, hermits gathered there under the tree.

The Prince was already born and the celestial angels holding his hands, made him walk seven steps each in all the four directions. Every time he raised his foot to take a step, the lotus flower blossomed underneath. The seven steps in South signified happiness and prosperity to the teeming masses. Seven steps in the West indicated that this was his last birth, and there after he will be free from the sufferings of birth, old age, death.

The seven steps in North indicated that he will be free from the transmigrations of life and death and the seven steps in the East indicated that he shall be a leading figure who shall guide the masses. Furthermore, the seven steps in the corners of each direction suggested that he shall overcome desires and attain Buddhahood. The seven steps upwards indicated that he shall not be harmed by the heretics while the seven steps downwards indicated that he shall shower the rain of Dharma thereby cooling down the fire of hell and give solace to all present there. The Prince while taking seven steps invoked the following Sutra each time he took a step:

GasHo Taibunjin/Zesai matsu goshin/Gaitoku rojin/togo do shujo.

In the endless cycles of transmigration/This is my last birth/
And transcending desires/I shall rescue the masses.

These seven steps symbolised *Sapta-bodhyangani*, the seven elements of wisdom. The lotus flowers that appeared from the earth was the earth goddess Prithvi herself.

Then the Four Quarter Kings Devas appeared and wrapped the Prince in a fine silken cloth placing him on a jewelled stool. Indra held a sacred canopy while Brahma swung the horse hair whisk left and right. The dragon gods of Nanda and Bhadra Nanda showered holy water from the sky on the Prince bathing him, the water stream being hot first and then cold. The Prince's body was golden in colour possessing thirty two distinct omens and radiating magnificent light illuminating *Trisahasra-Mahasahasro-Lokadhatu* the billion worlds of the domain of Buddha. The eight kinds of semi gods played the heavenly 'Gandharva' music in the air. The celestial robes and ornaments showered on the new born babe like rain drops.

At that time a minister named Dandapani visited King Shushodhana and related the news of the birth of the Prince and the various strange phenomena accompanying it. The King was perturbed and he proceeded to the garden. A woman attendant on watching the King come hurriedly went to the garden, and holding the prince approached the King saying, "Look O, prince! pay respects to your revered father". The King said, "First take him to the Brahmin to pay his reverence and get blessings and then only bring him to me." The attendant, holding the Prince proceeded to the Brahmin. Looking at the Prince the Brahmin said, "This child will certainly grow up to be a Chakravarti Raja, a great King".

The King along with the Prince came to the capital Kapilavastu. Not very far from the capital lived a deified Saint named
Virudhaka. The people of 'Sakya' Clan always visited this sage's temple and worshipped there in order to get their cherished wish granted. The King decided to accompany the Prince to the sage and told his ministers, "I am taking the Prince to pay tribute to the divine being". The Prince's wet nurse held him and as they were about to see the Saint, a female goddess appeared. She came down from the hall, welcomed the Prince, revered him with folded palms and then prostrating at the Prince's feet worshipped him and said to the nurse, "This Prince excels amongst human beings. Do not take him lightly. Moreover the Prince should not pay reverences to me on the contrary I should bow, revere and salute him," she said.

Thereafter all of them returned back to the castle. Queen Maya passed away on the seventh day of the birth of the Prince. The entire kingdom especially the King was in the grip of inconsolable grief. 'The Prince is still an infant who is going to take care of him'. Such thoughts saddened the King more and more. The father of Queen Maya had eight daughters. The youngest one named Mahaprajapati was made the Prince's foster mother. She reared him just like his own mother though she was his aunt. The Prince was named Siddhartha. Queen Maya was reborn in the heaven of thirty three gods, Trayasrimsa it has thus been told successively to us.

The second stage of the life of Buddha viz. his birth is timed to be ten months after the conception of Queen Maya. Extraordinarily, Buddha remained in the womb of his mother for ten months as against the time of nine months for the normal human beings, this fact being accounted in most of the versions including the Japanese ones and shows the influence of
pre-Buddhist traditions, this being regarded as the time period for holy people.

According to Konjaku when the time of her delivery neared she wished to go to the Lumbini garden for excursion, accompanied by her father, Suprabuddha. In all the versions Buddha's place of birth is the Lumbini garden though accounted with slight variation. For instance out of the two versions found in Mahavastu, according to one version Shushodhana received a call from Maya's father to come and stay for the delivery of the child there at her parental home. In the other version she wished to go to Lumbini for an excursion. In all other accounts she remains at her husband's palace and there is no mention of her father or home-town. For example Lalit Vistar accounts it plainly that Queen Maya, knowing the time of delivery, expressed her wish to the King for going to Lumbini grove, who in turn made elaborate arrangements for her. Nidana Katha accounts that she wished to go to her maternal home, city of Devdaha but on the way, attracted by the beauty of the Lumbini gardens, halted there. Similarly, her visit to the garden accompanied by her complete entourage is common to all the versions. Here it could be surmised that she perceived the time of delivery to be at hand and so set out for the garden predestined to be the place of delivery.

In Lumbini garden the tree under which the Prince is born is different. For example the Konjaku gives it as Asoka tree describing its beauty. In Indian versions the names of Sala tree

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1 Mahavastu: vol. II
2 Lalit Vistar: vol. VII
3 Nidana Katha: stanza 110
or Plaksha tree is mentioned. In Divyavadana the name of Asoka
tree appears. The posture of the delivery is also unique but
identical in all the versions, being the standing position with
her right hand held up and the child born without any pain or
defilement from below her raised arm. This conventional mode of
delivery in erect position is accompanied by the strange fact of
birth from the armpit. Besides this various other
extraordinary phenomena also accompanied the birth, like the
new born Prince being in his senses and being able to walk and
speak. This point is not mentioned directly in Konjaku but the
very description that "the angels held his hands and made him
walk seven steps in all the four directions each" implies this
only. The account of four deva Kings wrapping him in the silken
cloth placing him on a jeweled table is there in Buddha Charita.
Besides the other works also mention that he was greeted by the
celestial beings. Then in all the versions he takes seven steps
in all the directions invoking the Sutra given earlier. The
words of his proclamation differ to some degree but the contents
are the same. For example in Buddha Charita he proclaims, "I am
born for enlightenment for the good of the world. This is my
last birth in the world of phenomena." In Nidana he says,"I am
the best in the Universe". In the Japanese versions also he
makes this declaration,"I alone am honoured in heaven and on
earth" in the typical posture of raising one hand pointing
towards the sky and pointing towards the earth with the other.

1 Konjaku Monogatari: vol.1,2
2 Buddha Charita: canto 1-15
3 Nidana Katha: stanza 113
His extraordinary birth was a source of joy to all the living as well as quasi living plants etc. Unlike a normal infant, he was free from any kind of defilement a fact given in all the accounts. In spite of his being born clean, one of the miraculous phenomenon accompanying thereby is that of bathing the new born. According to it two streams of water gushed from above out one hot and the other cold. *Buddha Charita* accounts, "two streams of water clear as the rays of the moon and having the virtues one of heat and the other of cold poured forth from the sky and fell on his gracious head to give his body refreshment by their contact".

In *Nidan Katha* it is in a different form "due to the virtuous deeds of Bodhisattva as well as his mother, two streams of water poured down from the sky one on him and the other on his mother. This could be incorporated to symbolise the ritual of bathing the new born being presented in an extraordinary way by the Naga Kings. The Japanese versions also account the same facts. The *Shaka no Honji* states more precisely, "the two dragons Nanda and Bhadra Nanda came from the sea and Nanda ejected out cold water from his mouth while Bhadrananda ejected hot water". In Japan it is in accordance with their native traditions the dragons being associated with water and the sea.

After the description of these miraculous phenomena, the events turn to the realistic aspects of conveying the news of the birth of the Prince. Subsequently the concern and the anxiety of the father on watching the unusual phenomenons is mentioned in all

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1. *Buddha Charita*: canto 1-16
2. *Nidan Katha*: stanza 112
3. *Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei*: ch. XXI, p. 95
the versions, as also the festivities, auspicious rites and
donations and the visit to the temple also with some exceptions.
The arrival of some great saint to bless the new born prince and
his predictions on looking at the child is found in detail in all
the accounts. In *Buddha Charita* he is the great Seer *Asita*, in
*Nidan Katha* he is *Kal-deval*, the reverent Brahmin of King
Shushodhana whereas in *Konjaku* he is *Virudhaka*, the protector of
the Sakya clan. The contents of predictions are more or less the
same as mentioned earlier. For example in *Sutta Nipata* it is
related vividly whereby Saint *Asita* on watching the gods rejoice
exceptionally comes to know about the birth of the young Prince
and visits Shushodhana. There on looking at the child he is full
of joy and happiness on one hand but tearful on the other. When enquired by Sakyans about the reason for his weeping he
replies, "....... And I shall die meanwhile, I shall not hear
the matchless hero teaching the good law and that saddens me,
that loss distresses me." The *Nidana* version too accounts the
same in detail. According to 'Shaka no Honji' the King called
five hundred scholars to predict his future. While they were
consulting their texts, their leader gazed at the Prince and
started shedding tears. Curiously the King enquired the reason
to which he replied that the Prince would not take the kingship.
It is because he will renounce the world and adopt the path of
Buddhahood.
The Queen, although she did not suffer from any outward physical
pain as such died soon after possibly from the after effects of

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1. *Sutta Nipata*: vol.III
2. *Nidan Katha*: stanza 118
childbirth. She passed away when the prince was only seven days old. The Nidan Katha omits it completely and describes instead the naming ceremony and the predictions, whereas in Buddha Charita it is given as "when Queen Maya saw the vast power of her son like that of a divine seer she was unable to bear the joy it caused to her, then she went to the heaven to dwell there. The prince is brought up by one of her sisters". Regarding the identity of this sister some mention her to be the younger of the two sisters of the Queen, others mention her to be the youngest of the eight sisters of the Queen. Konjaku relates her to be the youngest of the eight sisters while in 'Shaka no Honji' she is mentioned as the younger one of the two sisters as found in most of the Mahayana texts. The Konjaku gives her father's name as Suprabuddha whereas Shaka no Honji calls him a rich man.

The unusual phenomenon of many other beings born simultaneously is found in some accounts though missing in Konjaku. According to Nidana katha, 'the seven Sahajatas were born simultaneously. These were Rahulamata, Channa, Kaludayi Prince Ananda, Ajaneeya the elephant, the bodhi tree, and the four containers filled with treasures.

In Mahavastu, according to one version several persons were born simultaneously each numbering five hundred, viz. five hundred young Sakayas headed by Saundarananda, five hundred maidens headed by Yashodhara, five hundred servants headed by Channa etc. 

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1 Buddha Charita: canto II, 18
2 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: p.94
3 Nidana Katha: stanza 115
4 Mahavastu: vol. II
As mentioned earlier, although this aspect is missing in Konjaku, it is given at length in the temple accounts of Seiryoji. It says, "in the Sakya Clan also five hundred boys were born on the same day. There lived eighty four thousand rich men in the country. A son was born to each one of them and five hundred boys were born in the King's family itself. Moreover to the various Kings in the eight kingdoms, a prince was born to each one the same day. 1 All these indicate that the initial following of the future Buddha was pre-destined.

The third stage in the life of Buddha viz. his youth could be broadly discussed under the sub headings of his life at the palace, his marriage and renunciation. In Konjaku it is given in the story as follows: "Prince Sidhartha's Luxurious Life in the Palace" 2.

Once upon a time in Tenjiku the son of King Shushodhana, Prince Siddhartha, attained the age of seventeen. The King called a meeting of his ministers and said,"The Prince has already attained adulthood, now he should get a wife. Is there any suitable girl to match the Prince". One minister suggested,"There is a Brahmin of Sakya family named Dandapani. He has a daughter named Yashodhara. She is extremely beautiful and wise. She would be suitable for the Prince". The King was overjoyed to hear it and he sent his messenger to the Brahmin saying, "The Prince is of marriageable age. We wish to propose for your daughter to be his wife". The Brahmin reverently accepted it. There upon selecting an auspicious day a

1 Seiryoji Engi: vol.VII, p.189
2 Konjaku Monogatari: vol.I, 3
procession of thousands of chariots departed to bring her to the palace. Then she and the prince lived like husband and wife. Furthermore, choicest of beautiful girls were selected to wait upon the prince and engage him in the worldly pleasures day and night. However, he is not seen with the wife in a compromising position. In the beginning, when the prince did not understand the ways of the world, he contemplated undistracted like a hermit, quietly at night. The Emperor every day enquired from different women attendants "Is the Prince intimate with his wife?". The women answered, "No, we have not yet seen them together in compromising positions". On hearing this the king lamented with grief and then added more number of beautiful women attendants skilled in dancing, in order to entice the Prince but all in vain. The Prince still did not become intimate with his wife. On hearing this the King was all the more concerned, his mind filled with all kinds of apprehensions.

One day the Prince on learning that the flowers in the garden were in full bloom and the water in the ponds cool and refreshing, wished to go out and he sent a message to the King through the female attendants saying, "The days in the palace are long and monotonous. I wish to go out to the garden for a change".

The King was pleased to know it and immediately he dispatched the ministers and the officials to get all the streets cleaned and decorated. First the Prince visited the King, his father, greeted him and took leave. The King sent a learned wise minister to accompany the Prince.

Then the Prince accompanied by a large company of officials came out from the eastern gate. The old and young, men and women
flocked to have a glimpse of the Prince. At that time the
Suddhadhivasa Deva, transformed into an old man with grey hair
and back bent completely came walking feebly with a stick in his
hand. The Prince asked his attendant, "Who is this man?" "He is
an old man Sir," replied the minister. "What is an old man" he
enquired. "This man was once young and healthy. Now with the
passage of years he has grown old. This phenomenon is called
aging." The Prince enquired again, "Is it only this man who has
aged or all others also grow old." "Every one is subject to old
age Sir" he replied. The Prince asked his chariot to be reversed
and taken back to the palace.

After some time the Prince once again expressed his desire to go
out of the palace for recreation. On hearing this the King
lamented, "Earlier also when the Prince went out, he met an old
man. Out of distress he has lost interest in everything. Now
why does he want to go out again?" Thus out of apprehension he
did not give permission. Then he called the minister and held a
meeting, "The other day when the Prince went out from the
eastern gate he saw an old man and has been detached since then.
He wishes to go out again. This time get the roads cleared
beforehand and make sure that no one unpleasant like that old man
comes before him." Thereafter he granted him the permission.
This time the Prince accompanied by a large company as before
departed from the southern gate. The Suddhadhivasa Deva again
transformed himself into a sick person and appeared before him.
He looked weak with an exceptionally large stomach, gasping hard
for breath. On seeing him the Prince asked, "Who is this man?"
"He is a sick man, Prince" the Minister replied. "What does it
mean to be sick", the Prince questioned. "The sick man is a
person who is not healthy. Whatever he may eat the four basic elements (soil, water, wind, fire) in the body are imbalanced and the body goes on degenerating gradually causing pain all over. The man loses all his vigour and vitality and is unable to sleep soundly even on a comfortable bed. He cannot move his body and needs some one to lift him up. Such is a sick person," he replied.

The Prince's heart was moved by the sight of that sick man and deeply touched by his misery, he asked, "Only this man is suffering from sickness or everybody suffers like this?" "Every man, rich or poor is subject to sickness." The Prince returned back to the palace and was deeply grieved and gradually ceased to enjoy himself.

On the other hand the King asked the attendant, "How did the Prince enjoy his visit this time?" The attendant replied, "As we left from the Southern gate, a sick man came before us. The Prince enquired about him and did not seem to enjoy anything thereafter. On learning this the King was greatly disturbed and he very much feared the Prince's going out of the palace again. He devised new means to attract the attention of the Prince.

At that time there lived a Brahmin's son named Udayin. He was very wise, talented and eloquent. The King called him to the palace and said, "The Prince no longer enjoys the worldly pleasures. I am afraid that soon he may not renounce the world and adopt the way of a sage. You become friendly with him immediately and talk about the pleasures of life and distract his mind from renouncing the world." Udayin readily did as per the King's command. He always remained with the Prince and watched the singing and dancing performances. Soon after, the Prince
again expressed his desire to go out. The King thought that in
Udayin's company the Prince must have been influenced and drawn
to the worldly pleasures and so gave his permission readily. The
Prince accompanied by Udayin and the other attendants who burnt
incense, showered flowers and played various types of musical
accompaniments, left from the western gate.

Now Suddhadhivasa Deva thought that before he had appeared in the
form of an old and sick man and the Prince's attendant had
reported it all to the King. So the King became angry and
cautious. This time, he thought, I will transform myself again
into a dead man and appear before the Prince but when people
report it to the King, the King will be all the more angry and
may inflict punishment on me. Therefore today I will appear
before the Prince and Udayin only, without showing myself to
others. So with this idea Suddhadhivasa transformed himself into
a dead person who was being carried away on a bier with flowers
and incense placed on it. The people carrying it were crying.
Only the Prince and Udayin saw it and the Prince asked
Udayin, "What is this?" Udayin fearful of the King did not
answer. The Prince asked thrice but in vain. Then Suddhadhivasa
using his supernatural powers hypnotized Udayin and made him
speak. Udayin uttered, "He is a dead person." "What is a dead
person?" asked the Prince to which Udayin replied, "Death is a
very painful phenomenon in which the spirit and consciousness
leave the body and all the body functions cease to work. This
man when he was alive posessed the five worldly desires, loved
wealth and did not realise the impermanent nature of life. Now
that he is dead, every thing is left behind. His father and
mother, the relatives, followers, no one has accompanied him. A
dead person is just like a vegetable. So death is really a sorrowful phenomenon." On hearing this the Prince was aghast. He asked Udayin, "Only this person died or all others also die likewise?" "All human beings are subject to death" was the reply. The Prince turned his chariot back to the palace. The King called Udayin and asked, "How did the Prince enjoy the excursion?" Udayin replied, "After leaving the palace we had not gone very far, when we saw a dead person on the road. I wonder from where he came because it was only myself and the Prince who saw him." On learning this the King thought, this time it has appeared only before these two and no one else. This must be the work of some god who is appearing in different forms. It is not due to any lapse on the part of my ministers that this has happened. After all Asita's prediction has come true. The King lamented sorrowfully yet in order to cheer up the Prince, the King sent men with the message "Son, the entire kingdom is yours. Why are you always dejected and do not enjoy it." Then he ordered his ministers saying, "The Prince has been out on excursions from the Eastern, Southern and Western gates. He has still not ventured out from the Northern gate. This time he surely would like to go from the Northern gate. So clean it beautifully and no unpleasant person as before should be allowed, and then in his heart he prayed, "As the Prince sets out from the palace gates, O Gods! do not let inauspicious things appear before him making him dejected and suffer." Once again the Prince approached the King and wished to go out on an excursion. The King asked Udayin and hundred other officials to accompany the Prince. He set out from the Northern gate and on reaching the garden got down from the horse and, withdrawing from his
other companions, sat down under a tree in a formal posture and contemplated deeply on the sufferings of this world viz. old age, sickness, death. Then Suddhadhvasa Deva transformed himself into a monk wearing the robe and holding a begging bowl and crosier in his hands and stood before the Prince. The Prince looked up and asked, "Who are you?" The monk replied, "I am a bhikshu." The Prince enquired again "Who is a bhikshu?" The monk replied, "A bhikshu is the man who rids himself of desire and seeks deliverance from the cycles of birth and death. This world is impermanent. I am pursuing the ultimate righteous path of 'anasrva' that is without illusion. I no longer admire form, nor am affected by sound or smell and am above taste, being unmoved by the sense of touch. I sincerely follow the path of dharma and by obtaining eternity I am on the brim of attaining nirvana." No sooner he had completed his words he ascended in the sky through his divine powers and flew away. The Prince mounted on his horse and returned back to the palace. The King enquired from Udayin, "This time was the Prince cheerful or not." He replied, "This time nothing unpleasant occurred on the road. However when he was in the garden sitting under a tree a person came. His head was shaved and his robe was coloured. He appeared before the Prince and spoke to him. After that he flew up in the sky. I do not know what they talked. The Prince when talking to him looked cheerful. Then after returning back to the palace he is again gloomy and dejected." On hearing this the King could not make out what such an omen indicated. He feared more and more that the Prince might leave the house and become a recluse and lamented immensely it has thus been told to us successively.
Here the focus suddenly shifts to the stage of the Prince's youth he attaining the age of sixteen or seventeen. The only famous legend about his childhood is that of the plough field which is accounted in *Nidana Katha* as under:

"One day the ploughing festival was held in the city and thousands of people holding silver ploughs and the King holding the golden one participated. The King took his son also and had a couch spread under a rose apple tree of dense shade and left his son there with a number of nurses to attend while he himself went to take part in the festival. Those nurses after some time left the child alone and proceeded to watch the festival. Bodhisattva when alone, sat cross legged and entered into the first meditation." ¹ This episode of the initial inclination of his meditative mind is not mentioned in Japanese versions. The *Konjaku story* does point out about his contemplative mind but in the 'Shaka no Honji' it is indirectly indicated while portraying his early life which is related in a rather detailed manner. It points "With the passage of time the Prince attained the age of three but he looked much more grown up than an ordinary three year old child. On watching him grow thus how happy his mother would have been if she was alive. Gradually he attained the age of seven. The King proclaimed him to be the crown Prince, he being attended upon by five hundred attendants. The Prince spent long spring days and full moon autumn nights, studying beside the window. In the month of April, he watched from the southern chamber, the birds making nests and warming up the eggs. When the mother bird returned fetching insects, the father bird departed taking turns to rear the eggs. On watching this, the

¹ *Nidana Katha: stanza 123*
compassionate Buddha's mind was aroused in him. He thought, 'Since antiquity the creatures living on mountains or plains, even those living in the sea have both father and mother, but why I have no mother but only father.' He enquired from others but nobody told him the truth, that his mother had died. While shedding tears, the Prince approached his aunt Mahaprajapati and posed the same question to her. She disclosed, "It is disturbing to see you cry, perhaps you do not know that your mother was the daughter of a king and was named Lady Maya. She was the elder sister to me. After you were born, she passed away after seven days. I am your mother's younger sister. I have brought you up." On hearing it the prince grieved immensely."

Such accounts show that the awareness of the transient nature of life was perceived by him and it predominated his mind from the very childhood and he began to contemplate about these things. Later on the encounters with a sick an ageing and a dead person worked as a catalyst to motivate him to renounce. Thus his meditative mind was nurtured over the time and the change did not occur overnight.

His life at the palace was luxurious partly due to his being a Prince and more so due to the conscious efforts of his father the King to add to the comforts and attractions as a precaution against the Saint's predictions that the Prince might renounce the world. The King tried all possible means to draw him to the sensual desires and the luxuries of life, lest the thought of renunciation creep into his mind. Although it is only the 'Konjaku' that mentions it in passing, in both the versions of

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1 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: p.125
the 'Shaka no Honji' i.e. the Togawa version as well as Akagi version as well as the Indian accounts it is presented vividly.

For example in Nikaya, Buddha relates it in the first person while addressing the monks saying, "Moreover monks I had three palaces, one for winter, one for summer and one for the rains. During the four monsoon months I was waited upon by the minstrels only, all of them women. I did not come down from my palaces in those months. These palaces were nine seven and five storied respectively named Ramma, Suramma and Subhaka and forty thousands of dancing girls were provided there." 1 Nidana also gives the same number of women attendants and the three palaces for the Prince. The Buddha Charita elaborates further, "... The palace was glorious as Kailasa with tambourines whose frames were bound with gold and which sounded softly beneath the strokes of women's fingers and with dances that rivalled those of the beautiful apsaras...., then as a captive to the women who were skilled in the art of love and indefatigable in sexual pleasures, he did not descend from the palace to the ground...."

Likewise in Anguttara Nikaya he speaks about his luxurious life, "Lily pools were made for me at my father's house solely for my benefit. Blue lilies flowered in one, white lilies in another and red lilies in a third. I used no sandalwood that was not from Benaras. My turban was made of Benaras cloth. A white sunshade was held over me day and night so that no cold or heat or dust or water might inconvenience me...I had three palaces one for winter, one for summer and one for monsoons. In the rainy

1 The Life of Buddha: Nanamoli, p.8-9
2 Buddha Charita: canto 11, 30-32
season, in my palace, I was entertained by minstrels with no men among them. . . . " 1

In the Japanese versions in accordance with the Japanese sense of 'Shiki', not three but four seasons are accounted. Thus the Prince according to 'Shaka no Honji' had four gardens depicting the landscape of the four seasons in the four corners of the Palace. Though in the Togawa 2 version a description of only three is given omitting the summer landscape whereas in the other one of Sekigi version all the four, viz. Spring in the East, Summer in the South, Autumn in the West and Winter in the North are given. According to the Seiryoji accounts, amidst ceremonies and festivities the Prince was appointed as the crown Prince at the age of fifteen.

In view of all this obviously, the Prince must have gained the reputation of being the one "reared in luxuries in the palace," as commented by Yashodhara's father when his daughter was approached for the marriage to the Prince. He objected saying, "It is the custom of our family to give our daughters in marriage to men skilled in the arts..." The version of Mahavastu presents an interesting account of how the Prince set his eyes on Yashodhara among the several maidens as the King decided to arrange nuptial bondage as the ultimate means to keep the Prince attached to worldly life. However, the girl's father refused the proposal saying that the Prince had grown up among women and knew no arts. Ultimately the Prince had to prove his strength and knowledge in various arts in order to convince his father. 3

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1 Anguttara Nikaya: no.3
2 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: p.100
3 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: pp.127-128
The marriage although an important landmark of his adulthood is rarely described even in the literary works. In spite of the descriptions of the other events like the donations, festivities, arrival of the Brahmmins etc. accompanying the Prince's birth given at length, comparatively speaking, the ceremonies and festivities associated with the marriage are not mentioned at all. In Konjaku too this event is accounted simply in the form of proposal by the King for Yashodhara the Brahmin Dandapani's daughter. Eventually it is accepted and Yashodhara is brought to the palace to live there with the Prince. Here there is no mention of their marriage ceremony actually taking place. Konjaku omits even the mention of the birth of the son Rahul. In fact it contradicts itself as on one hand it states that the two began to live like husband and wife and later points out that the King kept on enquiring from the women attendants whether they had seen the two in a compromising position and kept on getting negative replies. Similarly, Buddha Charita sums up the marriage of the Prince in one line i.e. "then from a family possessed of long standing good conduct he summoned for him the goddess of fortune in the shape of maiden Yashodhara by name". However in the Japanese versions of "Shaka no Honji" it is recounted interestingly, like in Mahavastu, as the episode of the archery competition held by the father of Yashodhara to select a groom for his daughter. It is related that, when the Prince was sixteen his father thought that the best way to tie him to worldly affairs would be to marry him. On learning about the

1 Mahavastu: vol.II
2 Buddha Charita: canto II, 26
3 Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei: p.101
beauty of the Minister's daughter, the King was very pleased and sent the proposal for her hand. The girl's father laid a condition that between the distance of forty yojana (360 miles) seven iron marks were placed which were to be struck by arrows. He announced it all over Tenjiku that whosoever succeeds in the archery competition would get the hand of his beautiful daughter. Several Princes including the heretic Devadatta tried but could not succeed. Ultimately the Prince by using his magnificent arrow succeeded and could win the hand of Yashodhara. Here there is the discrepancy of one year regarding the age at which the Prince got married, the other versions pointing it out to be seventeen.

In the Indian version of Nidan Katha she is given the status of Prince's chief consort and the mother of his son Rahul. Likewise Buddha Charita calls her "the Sakya King's daughter-in-law".

The Japanese version of Seiryoji Engi relates, "when the Prince was seventeen, the King wished to marry him. On being told by his minister that the daughter of merchant Dandapani was matchless in beauty and the ideal match for the Prince, the King ordered the rich merchant to give the hand of his daughter to the Prince. Then on selecting an auspicious day, he had her brought to the palace as the Queen." Furthermore Shaka no Honji elaborates on the person of Yashodhara pointing her to be known for her beauty all over India. However, there are general remarks about her being talented and beautiful and addressed as 'Rahulmata' or chief consort of the Prince...... although not

1 Nidan Katha: stanza 125
2 Buddha Charita: canto II, 27
3 Zokugunshoruiju: vol.789, p.390
nuch is mentioned about her role in the life of Buddha.

Incidentally a panel of the Gandharva School depicts the marriage scene.

The latter half of this stage viz. the Prince's encounter with the realities of life like death, sickness, old age is discussed with the next stage of his life viz. renunciation which is timed to be two years after his marriage. This stage of his life is accounted in Konjaku as follows, titled as, "Prince Siddartha's Flight to the Mountains Renouncing All." ¹

Once upon a time in Tenjiku when Prince Siddartha, the son of King Shushodhana was nineteen he earnestly wished to renounce the world and so approached his father. He looked majestic as if Lord Taishaku, (Sakro Devenam Indra) was visiting Lord Brahma deva. The ministers informed the King about the Prince's visit and the King though in grief rejoiced on learning about the Prince visiting him. The Prince bowed and greeted the King. The King embraced him and made him sit. Then the Prince addressed the King as follows, "Father, parting is the way of life found even in the closest of relationships. Please allow me to follow the path of Pravrajya, as I wish to find the solution to the problems of 'Priya Viprayoga-dukha', the sufferings of this world." On hearing this, the King was heart broken as if his heart was being torn to pieces by the falling of Vajra the thunderbolt. His body trembled and his mind was restless. He held the Prince's hand and cried.

The Prince was deeply moved on seeing the King in tears and returned back. Still his mind was preoccupied with the thoughts of Pravrajya and he looked sad. The King ordered his ministers

¹ Konjaku Monogatari Shu: vol. I, 4
to keep a strict vigil on all the four palace gates so that the sound of opening and closing of the gates could be heard from a distance. The Prince's wife Yashodhara saw three strange dreams at night. She dreamt the moon falling on the earth, her tooth coming off and her right arm cut off from her body. On waking up, she related the dreams to the Prince and asked "What is the meaning of these dreams?" The Prince replied, "The moon is there in the sky, your teeth are still intact and so is the arm. So such things are baseless and insignificant. You need not worry."

The Prince had three wives named Gopa, Yashodhara and Rukmani respectively. There were three palaces in the Imperial compound for each one of them, each living with twenty thousand women attendants. Just at that time Akanistha deities entered into the palace and changed their clothes and form into odd positions. Some lay asleep with their clothes off and eyes wide open and looking like corpses. Some lay with their ornaments falling off while some had urine and stool oozing out. The Prince held a lamp in his hand and saw their condition in the light of the lamp. He thought, "Such is the true appearance of women, repulsive and loathsome, then why is there so much of attachment for them". The time was past midnight and Akanistha as well as the other gods of Kamdhatu world all appeared in the sky and together they proclaimed to the Prince, "Every one inside and outside the palace is fast asleep. This is the right time for you to depart". On hearing this the Prince went to Chandak and ordered him, "Quickly get the chariot ready for me."

The charioteer Chandak due to the magical spell of the gods was awake. On hearing the Prince's order he was speechless with his body shivering and mind confused. After a while, shedding tears
he said, "I certainly cannot defy your orders but at the same time I have to obey the King's commands too. I am in a fix as to what to do. At this hour, you would not be going out for recreation, nor to attack the enemy. Then tell me, O Prince, why you wish to have the horse ready at this hour. After all what is your intention?"

The Prince replied, "I want to capture the evil desires binding and driving all the sentient beings. Chandak you cannot defy my orders." On hearing this Chandak cried and cried, tears rolling down like rain drops. He refused repeatedly but finally got the horse ready. After proceeding a little further the Prince told Chandak and Kanthaka, "In all human relations there is meeting and parting. The 'anitya', or transitory nature of this world is a matter of concern. Due to 'hetu-pratyaya', or the Karmic cycles of events, it is rare to get the chance to renounce everything and take Sanyas."

On hearing this Chandaka was dumbfounded. Even the horse Kanthaka did not neigh at all. At that time Prince's body emitted light that illuminated all the ten directions and he disclosed "In the past whenever the Buddhas renounced the world, they appeared as I look just now." The gods held the hoofs of the horse and along with Chandak all other gods followed the Prince while held the canopy over the Prince. The northern gates opened Sakra, the Indra Devanam automatically without any noise. As the Prince came out of the gate the heavenly gods praised him immensly. At that time the Prince vowed as follows, "Unless I find deliverance from birth, old age, sickness and death, the sorrows of this world, I will not return back to the palace. Till the time I attain Buddhahood and preach the dharma,
I will not see my father. Unless I conquer the desires of love and affection I will not meet Mahaprajapati and Yashodhara." Vowing thus he covered the distance of three Yojana. The gods followed him till that point and suddenly disappeared there after. The horses ran fast like a Garuda and Chandaka remained with him all this while. The Prince reached the forest where Saint Bhragu lived meditating. He got down from the chariot and while patting the horse's back said, "I am glad that you drove me here". Then he spoke to Chandaka, "In this world a man though goodhearted may not be good looking or though good in appearance may not be noble but you are an exception as in your case both the appearances and the mind excel. Now you should stop grieving as I have renounced all and have come to this mountain. You two are special as you are the only ones who have accompanied me up to this point and deserve my gratitude. I shall approach Saint Bhragu now. You two should immediately proceed back to the Palace."

On hearing this Chandak was heartbroken and falling down on the ground he lamented. The horse Kanthaka too on hearing the Prince's commands sat down licking his hoofs and shedding tears. Chandak said to the Prince, "I obeyed your orders and with Kanthaka accompanied you. There in the Palace, the King would be sad and grieving on not finding you. There would be turmoil in the Palace and that would be unbearable for me. In these circumstances how can I return back alone leaving you here."

The Prince said, "In this world someone dies and someone is born. Such is the nature of this transient world where nothing is permanent," and declared, "In the past, Buddhas in order to attain Buddhahood renounced all and attired themselves as monks with
their heads shaved. I will also do the same just now." Then he removed the crown from his head and jewels from his body and gave them to Chandak to be given to the King. After taking off the Keyura necklace from his neck he said, "Give it to Mahaprajapati." and gave the remaining ornaments to be given to Yashodhara. Then he told him, "Now you should return back to the palace with Kanthaka."

Then the Prince took out his sword and shaved his head himself. Sakro, the Indradevanam himself appeared and took away his hair. From the heaven, the gods lighted incense, showered flowers and sang praises of him. Then Sramana transformed himself into a hunter and wearing a saffron robe appeared before the Prince. On seeing a hunter dressed like this, the Prince was pleased and said, "The robe that you are wearing has been the garment for sages. It is the saffron robe that various Buddhas wore in the past. How dare you commit sins wearing this sacred robe."

The hunter replied, "By wearing this robe I allure deers. The deers on finding a saffron robe come closer and I kill them. The Prince said, "You are wearing this ochre-coloured robe in order to kill and not to seek for deliverance. Then I shall give you my robe decorated with precious jewels in exchange for yours and by wearing it I will seek deliverance for mankind". The hunter readily exchanged his robe thanking the Prince. The Prince took it and wore it. Then the heavenly being showed his true form and ascended up in the sky emitting blazing light.

Chandak who was watching it could perceive that hereafter it would be futile to urge the Prince to return and therefore prostrated himself on the ground and grieved even more. The
Prince told him, "Return back to the palace quickly and relate every thing."

Chandaka lamented loudly and Kanthaka, the horse, too weeping silently returned back. On reaching the palace he reported every thing in detail and starting with the King every one young and old cried and lamented. This Kanthaka was the prince's horse and Chandak his charioteer it has thus been told to us successively.

The prime factor that motivated Buddha to renounce the world and search for the ultimate truth was his encounter with suffering and the transient nature of life. This is commonly found, in almost all the versions under consideration, in the form of his chance encounter with an old man, sick man a dead body and a monk, of course this being done on divine instigation. The Prince knowing thus the true nature of man who is liable to age, disease and death is uneasy and restlessly he wishes to renounce everything in order to find solution to these problems. He feels, as accounted in Mahavastu, "Life at home is full of hinderance, the way of religious life is in the open air. It is not possible for one living at home to live a holy life that is utterly bright clean and pure, let me then now go away from home to homeless state." All through out his father, cautioned by the earlier predictions at the time of his birth tried his best to keep the Prince ignorant about the actual ways of the world, making him live in the make believe world of pleasures and luxuries, only to woo him to the materialistic world. Each one of Prince's outings too are kept directly or indirectly under vigilance.

1 Mahavastu: vol.II, p.114
In *Nidana-Katha*¹ the King is concerned on learning about his early return and enquires about the cause. On learning that the Prince was perturbed he asked for the dance performance to be arranged immediately for the Prince. Likewise *Buddha Charita* describes how the King himself supervised the arrangements for the Prince's outings in order to keep off all kinds of unpleasant things from the way of the Prince's outing. Besides he kept on adding to the sensual attractions for him hoping, "Perhaps he will be held by the restlessness of the senses and not desert us."

Moreover, he directed another excursion outside for him thinking, it "might cause a change of mood this time."² On the contrary the prince returned all the more dejected and withdrawn which made the King even more vigilant and cautious. The King avoiding rather than giving him permission, "arranged for an increased guard on him and for the choicest of pleasures". Regarding this point most of the versions say that the Prince did not disclose his true intentions to others. For example according to *Nidana* he did not bother to ask for his father's permission but did go to his wife to see his new born son before leaving but on finding them asleep, left quietly.

Apparently it was a tug of war between the King, the father and the gods. One representing the things of this world and the other the divine. Ultimately the latter succeeds, and the Prince through the revelation of the true but ugly picture of women is repelled. According to the temple accounts of Seiryoji too, the Prince sets out from the Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern

¹ *Nidana Katha*: stanza 127-130
² *Buddha Charita*: canto III, 50,51
³ *Nidana Katha*: stanza 137
gates to the garden outside and comes across an old man, a sick person, a dead body and a monk. He is convinced that to become a recluse is the right path for him and contemplated "I am nineteen and the month is of February the day being the seventh day of the month. This is the right time for me to leave".

In *Shaka no Honji* too the same reasons are accounted. In the Indian versions, mostly it is pointed out that it was the deed of Sudhadhivamsa Deva. According to some texts like *Buddha Charita*, the Sudhadhivamsa god who was responsible for the four sights before the Prince are only seen by Bodhisattva and the charioteer. This fact is retained in *Konjaku* version whereas in the other cases it is missing. The presence of some supernatural element is obvious though seldom pointed to directly. As pointed out earlier, the ultimate aversion for the sensual objects came from watching the sleeping women lying in odd positions. The Prince even after identifying his aim to search for the ultimate truth was unable to take the final step to renounce due to his paternal attachment. This incident of seeing the ugly sight of sleeping women acted as a kind of catalyst to detach him from the physical and material world ultimately.

In *Buddha Charita* it is accounted in detail in the chapters "The Women Rejected" and "The Flight". In the former chapter as the title suggests the state of women adopting all kinds of means to allure the Prince is described. Even the eloquent Udayin suggests "accept them with genuine feeling. For when you have obtained such rare pleasures of the senses you should not condemn them." He gives various examples of the earlier great sages who

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1. *Zokugunshoruiju*: p.390
2. *Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Taisei*: pp.100-103
regarded love as the highest accomplishment. But the Prince argued aptly, "If the desires rise in the heart of a man who knows that death is inevitable, I consider that his soul is made of iron, in that instead of weeping he delights in the great danger" 1.... Subsequently in the chapter "The Flight" on watching the odd distorted figures of the sleeping women who were put to sleep by 'Akanîstha-deities' he realised, "such is the real nature of women in the world of living, impure and loathsome..." and "thus he recognised the difference and there arose in him a desire to escape that night." 2

In the Konjaku version, these women are the female attendants employed in the three palaces belonging to Prince's three wives, Yashodhara, Rukmani and Gopa. Incidentally there are other references about Yashodhara but there is no mention of the other wives. Regarding the Prince's decision to renounce, it was Yashodhara who saw a strange dream. This episode of the dream is not found otherwise, unlike the dream seen by Queen Maya on conception. In Lalit Vistar it is given that it was the King who dreamt that the prince was determined to leave home...

The presence of the supernatural element is surely there as otherwise the Prince could not have left the highly guarded palace unnoticed. Moreover, the gods "did not let the neighing of the horses be overheard by anyone... they kept their hands under the horse's hoofs whenever the horse stepped." 3 Mahavastu accounts that "to avoid the sound created by the horse's hooves

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1 Buddha Charita: canto IV, 99
2 Buddha Charita: canto V, 64
3 Lalitvistar: 14
4 Nidana Katha: 159
the four great gods took hold of Kanthaka's hooves and the heavy palace gate was opened up by a Yaksa, Supratishtita. Konjaku accounts that the gods persuaded him openly saying, "Everyone inside and outside the palace is fast asleep. This is the right time for you to depart." The northern gate opened automatically and the gods held the horse by his four limbs and he did not neigh at all. As the Prince came out, the gods accompanied him praising him while Indra held the canopy over him. This aspect of the gods accompanying him while showering flowers on him is present in Mahavastu too. However, the Konjaku story strikes a balance between the supernatural and the real by showing how Buddha reasoned out and convinced the reluctant Chandaka to take him out of the Palace at that hour. The indications of his irretrievable return is obvious as Buddha proclaims without looking back even once, "I shall not be entering the city named after Kapila till I have seen the further shore of life and death."

This aspect is present in the Japanese version too as Buddha proclaims that he shall not return to the palace nor see mother or wife unless he finds the solution to the problems of mankind. Thus he proceeds on to the path, determined to attain his goal. Then Konjaku describes the point of the return of the horse and the charioteer who are reluctant to depart but after the incident of the hunter they realised that it would be futile to persuade the Prince any more. The legend of the hunter is found in some versions like Buddha Charita relating how the Prince changed his appearance and turned a monk. On the other hand in Nidana the

1 Mahavastu: vol. 2
2 Buddha Charita: canto V, 84
Ghatikare gods appeared who gave him the robe, bowl and other objects needed by a monk. Thus the Konjaku story about the hunter though descriptive is not original.

The return of the horse and charioteer is accounted in all the versions although with a slight degree of variation. Some account that the two returned back to the capital and broke the news there. According to Nidana Kanthaka died of grief on that very spot and was reborn in heaven. Japanese versions account the state of the horse in an interesting manner presenting that the horse who flew like a bird while going returned with staggering steps taking three years and three months to cover the distance back to the capital. Buddha Charita accounts that he took eight days to travel the same distance which, by his lord's command, he had covered in a single night on the horse....

Thus Buddha, determined to pursue his path in the search of ultimate truth, was unmoved by his charioteer's pleas and also turned a deaf ear to the officials sent by his father and to the Magadha King Srenyas' affectionate advice and his offer of half the Magadha kingdom and even to Mara's attractive proposal for universal rulership. In the next chapter the path pursued by him is discussed along with the other stages of his life.

1 Nidana Katha: stanza 147
2 Muromachi Monogatari Taisei: p.107
3 Buddha Charita: canto VIII, 2